

Since first coming to Congress, I have been fighting for the farmers and ranchers of Minnesota's First Congressional District. Agriculture production is vital to the economy of Southern Minnesota and farming is the heart of our rural communities. As a member of the House Agricultural Committee, I have worked to ensure that the farm policies being made in Washington make sense for southern Minnesota's farmers and ranchers.

In these tough economic times, our dairy and pork producers have been experiencing a serious crisis. I have organized my colleagues to urge Secretary Vilsack and USDA to address these concerns as quickly as possible to save jobs and revitalize our local economies. As co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Dairy Farmers Caucus, I have organized many of my colleagues to help with these efforts. Some of things we have been able to achieve include:

- I organized a joint letter with 62 of my colleagues in the Congress to urge the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative to quickly engage in negotiations to open U.S. pork export markets with China, which the Chinese government closed earlier this year on ill-founded fears due to H1N1 Flu. In late October, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and U.S. Trade Representative Kirk announced that China agreed to open its doors again to American pork.

- The FY2010 Agriculture Appropriations bill included \$350 million in emergency assistance to struggling dairy farmers. The agreement reached by negotiators would provide \$290 million in direct support to dairy farmers, while an additional \$60 million would be used to purchase dairy products for government programs – increasing the price dairy farmers would be paid for the milk they produce. This provision was added after the Dairy Farmers Caucus fought for its inclusion.

Farm Bill

In 2007 and 2008, I championed the farm bill and worked to secure an override of the President's veto. The farm bill included several of the initiatives I fought for, including;

- Language modeled after my Farm Flex amendment, which will allow producers in the Midwest to grow fruits and vegetables for processing on up to 75,000 acres, including 34,000 acres in Minnesota.
- Nearly a dozen different provisions added to help beginning farmers and ranchers get their start in agriculture. These include a program to provide Conservation Reserve Program transition payments to encourage landowners who are taking land out of CRP and putting it back into production to sell or rent that land to a beginning farmer; a 10% set-aside within various conservation programs to specifically target money at new producers; a requirement that USDA target Risk Management Education at beginning farmers, so they can learn how best to use crop insurance; \$75 million in mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program; and improvements to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Down Payment Loan Program and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Land Contract Program.
- A provision that requires USDA to streamline its application process for conservation programs, making it easier for producers to enroll without having to complete redundant paperwork.
- An amendment I offered requiring USDA to study the impact of rail service on rural America, particularly regarding agricultural inputs and commodities, renewable fuels, and coal.
- An amendment I offered that requires USDA to allow producers to certify their eligibility for the Conservation Security Program at the same time they certify their farming operation as organic. This saves time, reduces paperwork, and helps farmers spend less time in the FSA office and more time in the fields.